



HEARD ACROSS MONTANA

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Homeland Security Grant Program After-Action Conference Report

By E. Wing Spooner espooner@mt.gov

The Department of Homeland Security held a "FY08 Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) After-Action Conference" in San Francisco on Aug. 19. Thirty-nine states were in attendance. Dan Sullivan, Montana Disaster and Emergency Services (DES), attended for the Montana SAA (State Administrative Agency).

The purpose of the conference was to solicit state, local and tribal feedback on the overall FY08 homeland security planning process and to outline suggestions and considerations for the FY09 funding cycle. According to Sullivan, there is concern at the federal level that the FY09 Homeland Security Grant Program process may be delayed into the spring of 2009 due to the election. No one is quite sure if Congress will appropriate the FY09 funds by December or if the federal government will operate month to month by continuing resolution. Moreover, a change of administration may lead to changes in HSGP priorities.

Recommendations to DHS by attendees included changing the grant process from a competitive grant to a formula grant. Because the HSGP grant has been deemed competitive, states, urban areas, tribes and counties are less likely to share information. Furthermore, attendees recommended that DHS base funding priorities or set-asides on factual data that is shared with the grant recipients. Problems arise when DHS directs funds to specific projects when a respective jurisdiction may have already established a given capability, but must spend the funds for the capability anyway.

Montana's HSGP allocation for FY08 was \$6.1 million. Of that total, the Montana Senior Advisory Council (SAC) allocated \$3.1 million to the Interoperability Montana (IM) Project.

IM Technical Committee Meeting

By E. Wing Spooner espooner@mt.gov

The Interoperability Montana Technical Committee (IMTC) met in Helena on Mon., Aug. 25 for an all-day meeting. Deputy Director/Chief of Staff Larry Fasbender with the Dept. of Justice reported on the Memorandum of Understanding for Maintenance which the IM Project is working on with the Montana Highway Patrol (MHP).

The MHP has used an estimate of five FTEs in its next budget cycle to cover projected costs of maintaining the IM microwave system for the entire state. It would be helpful to have an assessment performed to provide a more accurate estimate of costs and response times to provide justification for the request. Members discussed methods for obtaining this information, and derived an action plan to provide estimates for labor, spare parts,

response time, network monitoring, and other vital services.

IMTC Chair Bob McWilliams reported on Administrative Committee interim decision making. The committee signed certificates of completion for equipment inventories at the Pacific Steel, Flying J, Pat's Knob, and Divide Mountain sites. Members also approved Sabre Tower to perform change order work at the High Flat, Timberline and Nixon Ridge sites.

The committee took formal action to request Motorola to order the non-frequency dependent trunked radio equipment for the Big Mountain site along with three antennas so everything can be cold installed before the snow flies. Once the combiners are complete, the ski area will transport personnel and equipment to the site to complete the installation. The group also approved a cold installation of equipment for the Bull Mountain site.

Members discussed technical specifications of the Fox Creek tower and the possibility of developing the Sioux Pass site to be able to use a lower tower at Fox Creek. Preliminary path analysis work will be performed so that accurate cost comparisons and options can be thoroughly explored.

Scott Bradford, PSSB, reported on the Aug. 12 Frequency Sub-Committee meeting and distributed copies of the minutes. Bob McWilliams reported on Red Mountain frequencies. Roger Smith, MHP, gave an account of recent site walks and said that microwave circuits are complete for the western leg of the Northern Tier. A Harris-Stratex crew was installing the Gallatin County microwave ring the same day as the meeting.

Under consortia reports, Kerry O'Connell, South Central Consortium, reported that Park County awarded the Myer's Flat site contract to Sabre Tower. In addition, Sweet Grass County just received approval on a number of frequencies as well as an easement to the Grey Cliff site. Scott also said that the construction RFP committee met and scored applicants. An apparent winner has been selected. Qualification and contract reviews are taking place.

The next IMTC meeting will be Monday, Sept. 22 at the State Capitol in Helena beginning 9:00 am.

Northern Tier Site Planning Session

By Pete Mohan pmohan@mt.gov

Bill Fleiner, Chair of the IMPD Governance Committee, accompanied by Chris Christensen, Scott Bradford, and Pete Mohan, all with the Public Safety Services Bureau (PSSB), met in Kalispell on Tues., August 26 with a variety of area representatives, including Flathead County Commissioner Joe Breneman, DES Coordinator Mark Peck, Deputy Director of the Office of Emergency Services Cindy Mullaney, County Radio System Administrator Jack Spillman, Lincoln County Sheriff Daryl Anderson,



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Lieutenant Roger Guches, and DES Coordinator Marc McGill.

Various options for sustaining the present sharing of communications sites in Flathead and Lincoln Counties were discussed. Of particular interest is BNSF Point of Presence (POP) locations where the IM network can interface with fiber optics to provide connectivity along U.S. Highway 2. Funding and technical options for build out and expansion of links were discussed with further meetings planned to formulate action items.

The next meeting is to be Sept. 11 at 1:30 pm, at the Flathead County EOC, following the Northern Tier Consortium teleconference.

Tri-County Consortium Meeting

By Pete Mohan pmohan@mt.gov

The Tri-County Interoperable Consortium (SWIP/Tri-County) meeting took place Aug. 27 in Helena. Vice Chair Bill Fleiner presided over the meeting, and members discussed the Cominco, Limestone, Bull Mountain and Boulder Hill communications sites and their impact on the Interoperability Montana (IM) Project. Near completion of these sites represents the culmination of Phase II of the SWIP/Tri-County project.

The group discussed frequency requirements that are still outstanding and tie ins to other consortia and partnership agencies. In addition, the group spoke about methodology for linking requested grants with existing grants as well as with county and state funding to complete sites. Consortium member project reports also were submitted and new action items were assigned. Mark Adams, Northrop Grumman, provided the latest updates regarding site completion. Programming and installation efforts are on track. FEMA has received the consortium's Assistance to Fire Fighters grant request, and updates have been requested.

The next Tri-County Consortium meeting will be Wed., Sept. 24 at 10:00 am at the Department of Corrections (DOC) Conference Room, located behind 515 N. Sanders St., in Helena.

Canada's Second National Voice Interoperability Workshop

By E. Wing Spooner espooner@mt.gov

The "Moving Public Safety Voice Interoperability Forward" forum will be held Dec. 7-10 at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel in Toronto, ON. The event is being co-presented by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, Emergency Medical Services Chiefs of Canada, Canadian Police Research Centre, and the Canadian Interoperability Technology Interest Group (NPSTC North).

Registration is \$375 plus tax. Representatives from Montana and other border states are invited to attend. The first workshop of this kind took place last March in Ottawa.

The Second Canadian Voice Interoperability Workshop aims to again bring together a broad base of public safety and emergency management interoperability practitioners to develop a mutual understanding of key voice interoperability issues facing today's public safety sector.

With a focus on information exchange, topic-specific discussion, and interactive break-outs, this second national workshop will promote the transfer of best practices and support development of a unified approach to public safety interoperability across the country and between nations. Speakers from Canada, the United States and Israel will be presenting. Approximately 200 delegates are expected to attend. They will come away with real-world insights, practical knowledge, and numerous tools that can be put to work immediately.

A block of rooms is being held until Nov. 7. The CACP-CITIG Conference Rate is \$185 plus tax. Call (800) 663-7229 or (800) 441-1414 for hotel reservations. Conference registrations must be made in advance online at www.cacp.ca. For those without Internet access, please call (613) 233-1106 for further assistance.

Upcoming Meetings

Sept. 8

IM Finance Committee

Helena • 9:00 am - Noon

Anderson & ZurMuehlen • 828 Great Northern Blvd.

Sept. 8

IM Governance Committee

Helena • Noon - 5:00 pm

DOC Annex Conf. Rm.; Behind 515 N. Sanders St.

Sept. 9

IM Project Directors (IMPD) Meeting

Helena • 9:00 am - 3:00 pm • State Capitol, Room 152

Sept. 10 – Please note date correction

Statewide Interoperability Executive Council (SIEC)

Helena • 10:00 am • Rm. 152 State Capitol

Sept. 10

Central Montana Consortium (CMICC)

Great Falls • 10:00 am • Location to be Announced

Sept. 11

Northern Tier (NTIP) • Teleconference • 9:00 am

Sept. 16

Western Consortium (WICC)

Missoula • 10:00 am • Missoula County Courthouse
200 W. Broadway (basement)

Sept. 17

South Central Consortium (SCMIC)

Ennis • 10:00 am • Location to be Announced

Sept. 18

I-15/90 Corridor Consortium

Butte • 10:00 am • Chamber of Commerce; 1000 George St.

Sept. 22

Fleet Mapping Work Session

Great Falls • Location to be Announced